

## too much distance by jakepurralta

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**Summary:**

Something something peer pressure and Steve and Nicole being mischievous in their ways of getting Jonathan under that mistletoe with the girl he likes (i.e. Nancy Wheeler).

## too much distance

### Author's Note:

Even though I haven't written anything in months (I'm terribly sorry about that), I did manage to type up a Christmas gift for you all. (Edited to swap Carol with Nicole because I forgot that Carol was the mean one. Whoops.)

If you asked Jonathan why in the world he decided to attend Steve's Christmas party, he wouldn't know what to tell you. Granted, they're not exactly adversaries anymore. They'd battled an inter-dimensional monster together and managed to find some common ground. Steve even ended up making genuine attempts to get to know him better, even long after him and Nancy had broken up. Something about having grown apart, he had said at the time, though he wouldn't elaborate on it. (And Jonathan never asked. He knew better than to set himself up for potential disappointment.)

Sure, yeah, he couldn't deny the fact that a small part inside of him played around with the idea that maybe Nancy broke up with Steve (she was the one who initiated it, that much he *did* know) because she shared the same sentiment as he felt whenever he was around her. That sentiment was...hard to describe for him. It was unlike anything he'd ever felt before. He felt his heart constrict in his chest, his breath catching, he felt as though his feet were dangerously close to elevating up into the sky, whilst simultaneously feeling like she kept him right there with her. He felt strong. He felt weak. He felt confident. He felt extremely vulnerable. She had a tendency to make him feel like she saw right through him, right through that thick wall he had built up throughout the years, one that consisted of statements such as "I don't like most people" and "I'm more comfortable when I am alone".

But her presence? He never seemed to mind it.

This feeling, of suddenly having someone in his life (who wasn't Will or Joyce) that he wanted to see every day, it was a very strange feeling indeed.

But he never really acted on it. How could he act on something he didn't understand? Besides, who was he to put her in an awkward position with Steve? What did he want from her? He couldn't possibly ask her to leave Steve for him. For what? There were just too many questions, too many uncertainties.

So the months passed and Jonathan's feelings ebbed away. (He shoved them to the back of his mind where they belonged. Out of reach.)

Then suddenly she came stumbling back into his life, distant tears in the corners of her eyes, telling him that she broke up with Steve. She needed someone to talk to, but after Barb died, all she had was Steve. And now Steve was no longer an option. A tear had rolled down her cheek (he struggled to keep himself from reaching out to her) and she let out an embarrassed chuckle. "I don't mean to make it sound like you're my third option." He tilted his head at that, not feeling even an inch of a jab. All he wanted to do in that moment was to make her feel better.

Fast forward to 1985, where Jonathan found himself awkwardly standing in the corner of the room, a red cup in his hand. While Steve insisted, he refused to drink any beer tonight. He had no intentions of staying any longer than he felt he had to so the second he'd get the chance, he promised himself he would slip out and drive back home.

Music was blaring all around him, not at all the type of music he was familiar with. It was loud and brash and he struggled to find any rhythmic pattern to it. He looked around at the people that surrounded him. He barely knew anyone here. He did make some small talk with Steve, but he figured it was Steve's obligatory task as a party host. By this time, the guy had already disappeared into the crowd, nowhere to be found.

The feeling of a hard pat on the back of his shoulder startled him to say the least. "Come on, Jonathan, get into the Christmas spirit!"

He turned around to find the red-haired Nicole standing in front of him, looking extremely lively. Perhaps a little bit tipsy, even. She laughed neighborly, which put Jonathan a bit more at ease. Besides Nancy and then Steve, Nicole was the only one who was genuinely

nice to him. He might not consider her a friend, but she was definitely someone he didn't mind making occasional small talk with.

He smiled sheepishly and shrugged. "Sorry, I'm still getting used to this. I never really celebrated Christmas like this before."

He wasn't sure if she even heard him over the music but it didn't matter anyway because her energy shifted suddenly when she gave him a mischievous look. "You ever kissed someone before, Byers?"

If Jonathan had taken that time to take a sip he surely would have choked on it. Nevertheless, he was absolutely flabbergasted at her sudden inquiry. "What? N-no."

She gave him no chance to think about it or fight it, and slipped her arm through his, dragging him along with her. "What a shame. Come on."

"Wh- where are we going?"

"Don't worry Jonny boy, I'll be sure to make it worth your while."

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He could have been spending his Christmas night comfortably at home, the three of them all snuggled up on the couch enjoying each other's company. He could have been resting from an entire afternoon of throwing snowballs at each other and frustrating Luna with making it seem like they were playing catch, the dog painfully unaware that a snowball is not an item that can be caught with the mouth and then brought back.

But *nooooo*... here he was, staring anxiously at the door leading to Steve Harrington's ridiculously big guest bedroom, knowing that someone (who he was about to kiss, on the *lips* no less) was awaiting him on the other side of it. A shaking hand to the side of his face adjusted his mask ever so slightly. He wondered if hiding his identity had any point if only 40% of his face was covered. Hawkins was full of interesting people that sure as hell weren't idiots.

"Do you still want to do this or are you just planning to make me die of old age?" Steve's voice was a nerve racking reminder that it was all

very real, though Jonathan found some solace in the fact that after all this, he was still offered an out if he really didn't want to.

"Don't worry, we all voted and made sure you're going to kiss someone you actually like. So it's not Nicole."

He heard an offended yelp at that, even though he knew full well that Nicole wasn't interested in him romantically. The light-hearted banter that followed after that gave him some time to take some deep breaths before raising his hand. The room went quiet. "I'm ready."

Much to his surprise, they all stayed quiet after that. He heard Steve unlock the door and felt (he guessed it was) Nicole's hands guiding him inside until he was fully inside the room and the door locked behind him. His heart was racing when his eyes fell upon the figure in front of him. It was definitely a girl. She had curly brown hair and a slender body that turned around to face him until-

She froze, mouth agape in shock. "Jonathan?"

He was equally surprised and aware of the fact that it was none other than Nancy Wheeler in the room with him, even though she too had a mask on her face. So much for anonymity. Not really knowing what to say, he heard himself stammer, "I'm- I'm wearing a mask."

She chuckled at his clumsy remark, a warming sound that distracted him from just how red she had turned at this point. "Well, so am I and I'm pretty sure you know who I am." She meandered across the room, past the coffee table and the old chairs that distanced her from him until she was so close he could swear he was hearing her heartbeat. He held his breath when she pointed a finger up above them. His eyes followed her direction to a mistletoe hanging right above their heads. "So you got talked into this thing as well?"

Still, he didn't know what to say. "Yeah."

She grinned again and shook her head at the absurdity of the situation. "Well, this is something I won't be forgetting soon." She removed the mask from her face and tossed it away, putting her hands on her hips. "What now?"

They both turned to stare at the door when they heard impatient knocking. "You guys have been awfully quiet in there. I hope you're not getting ahead of yourselves!" Nicole's teasing voice seemed to tear through the door. Yeah, she had definitely been drinking.

If it was even possible, Nancy looked more embarrassing at that, stuck between staring at Jonathan through her eyelashes and avoiding his gaze altogether. He looked down, nervously shifting his weight from one foot to the other.

He finally began to speak, though it was at the same time she was about to offer a suggestion herself.

"I should probably-" "Since we're here, we could-"

They even apologized in unison, sharing a moment of soft laughter until he gestured for her to continue.

"Um," Nancy restarted, a blush creeping up on her cheeks. "...since we're here, under the mistletoe..." She averted her eyes, a shy smile on her face.

Jonathan momentarily forgot how to make his own heart beat. But he needed to hear it from her. He never dared to wish this, not even in his head. So he needed her to spell it out for him.

Fortunately, she didn't back out. "It's tradition."

"Tradition." He echoed her softly, making sure he heard her right. She nodded.

"Unless- unless you don't want to. I mean, I don't want to force you to-"

"No!" There was a shaky twitch in his voice. He cleared his throat to regain his composure and to lower his voice again. "No. It- it's fine." He watched her suck in a deep breath as he attempted to formulate sentences in his head, *anything* to say to her, anything to make her (them) feel more at ease in this moment. "It's good that-"

And then all of a sudden she interrupted him, standing on her tippy toes, pressing her hands on his chest and her lips on his. His eyes fell

shut. His entire body wanted to give way, his knees buckled dangerously and all he could feel, all he could *taste* in this moment was her. Just her. He placed his hands on her lower back and she must have seen it as an invitation to take it a step further, and so she began to move against him, making him melt into her.

He knows that he misses her touch just as soon as it's gone because a shiver runs up his spine when she pulls away from him, though she doesn't step away. Instead, she stays in his proximity, her hands now clasping his shirt, his hands still on her, feeling like they belong there.

He lips are swollen, her voice is breathy. "That was..."

He swallows anxiously. Waits for her to step on the brakes. To remind her that a girl like he would never fall for a guy like him.

What he doesn't know, however, that he's about to learn that this particular girl knows him far better than he thinks. She grows silent and presses her lips together, reaching out to stroke a strand of hair away from his face. Her hands trail tenderly (and agonizingly slowly) to the back of his head, until he realizes she's undoing his mask. It's amazing how she manages to do this with one hand, but she's able to pull the cord and the mask drops down to the floor, revealing his face to her.

"Too much distance." She says, not taking her eyes off of him.

It still feels all too unreal to him. "Really?"

If that was even a question she answers it by kissing him again. (And again. And again.)